

AWARENESS ABOUT PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH CONSANGUINEOUS MARRIAGES - SURVEY AMONG ISRAELI ARAB ADOLESCENTS

L. Jaber¹, O. Romano², G.J. Halpern³, I. Livne², M. Green², T. Shohat²

¹*Department of Pediatrics, Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel, Petah Tikva* ²*Ministry of Health, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv* ³*Department of Genetics, Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel, Petah Tikva, Israel*
jabe@bezeqint.net

Background: Because consanguineous marriages are widely practiced among Arabs and are associated with an increased incidence of congenital malformations, we carried out a survey to evaluate the level of knowledge among adolescents about the issues associated with consanguinity.

Methods: We carried out a national survey among students aged 15-16 within the Israeli Arab community. Variables considered were gender, religion, location of residence, parents' level of education, number of siblings, whether their parents' marriage was consanguineous, whether any family members had congenital malformations, and the respondents' religious beliefs and traditions. Association between those variables and the level of knowledge that were statistically significant by univariate analysis were also assessed in a multivariate model.

Results: One quarter of the students (24.5%) demonstrated a high level of knowledge, while 29.7% had a moderate level and 45.8% a low level. Overall, 8.15% knew that consanguinity was associated with a high incidence of congenital malformations, although only half of these (50.0%) knew what congenital malformations were and which were associated with consanguinity. The variables significantly associated with a low level of knowledge were gender, level of parents' education, consanguinity between the students' parents, and extreme religious attitudes.

Conclusions: Efforts to increase the knowledge of Israeli Arab adolescents about consanguinity should therefore be directed toward these groups.

